

PASSport to Success: An Examination of a Parent Education Program

A. Y. "Fred" Ramirez

Abstract

This report highlights the evaluation of a parent education program conducted with an urban middle school in Southern California. The program called *PASSport to Success* enables parents to learn study skills and how to better teach their children how to study in school. This evaluative report conducted a pretest and a posttest on student academic performance as well as interviews with parents throughout the eight weeks. The program, administered to low-socioeconomic status parents over an 8-week workshop series, showed positive academic gains in their children's grades.

Key Words: parent education, student success, parent involvement, academic achievement

Introduction

Today's schools are looking for ways to increase student academic achievement due to the call for schools to improve student success from parents and legislators and the increased emphasis on standardized testing. We have known for many years that intensifying parental involvement increases student success (Henderson & Mapp, 2002) and is evidenced by many articles and researchers who have been examining family involvement from the perspectives of a wide variety of fields (Baldwin & Bauer, 1994; Chambliss & Doughty, 1994; Coblá

& Brazelton, 1994; Pipher, 1994; Poulsen, 1992). Therefore, there has been a call from many people to develop programs to increase parent/family participation in the lives of their children.

As a researcher in parent/family involvement, I was asked to examine a parent education program by the program's publishers. This program involves parents going through an eight-week workshop series to learn how to increase their children's study skills and, thereby, the child's academic achievement. After agreeing to teach the series, I was asked to give input regarding the program, for no report had been developed thus far. I wish to state that although the publishers of the program asked for my input, the report is based on unbiased research and on evidence from the parents/families that went through the workshop.

The primary objective for this assessment was to provide guidance regarding a parent education program called *PASSport to Success* (hereafter referred to as *PASSport*). The report focused on providing information centered on

- How parents use the program in the daily lives with their children;
- Whether *PASSport* assisted parents in learning about the skills as defined in the program;
- What recommendations the parents have regarding the program; and
- Whether the academic performance of students whose parents participated in the program increased.

Focus of the Assessment

To focus the evaluation on these areas, four broad questions were pursued:

- How did parents interact with their children after learning various modules from *PASSport*?
- What changes occurred in the lives of the parents and students?
- What recommendations/suggestions could the participants provide for possible improvement of *PASSport*?
- How does *PASSport* differ from other parent education programs?

In pursuing data to help answer these questions, these quantitative and qualitative methods were used to triangulate the data: Surveys were given to parents who participated in the *PASSport* program during the first day of orientation (pretest) and the concluding workshop (posttest) with questions on a Likert scale in both English and Spanish (see Appendix); open-ended questions on the survey were asked, and interviews were conducted throughout the workshop so participants could more clearly define their attitudes toward *PASSport*.

Background Information

Because of the complexity of parent involvement and the various agencies that investigate trends that include parents, definitions will be used throughout this document. These terms will assist our understanding of the many ways parents and schools come in contact with one another. Often, “parental involvement” is confused with “parent education” programs, thereby creating difficulties for teachers and parents.

Parent: in this study, this term is defined as the students’ biological, foster, or adoptive parents. The term also refers to others who are responsible for the student, including siblings, adult friends, senior citizens, community members, employers, or school staff (see Wheeler, 1992).

Parental involvement: this term refers to any action that the parents take for a child in school or outside of school related to the child’s education. It also refers to actions taken by school community members to involve parents in or outside of the school setting.

Parental involvement programs: this refers to organized programs that school or parental groups plan and offer to increase parental involvement inside or outside of the school grounds.

Parent education programs: this refers to organized programs that any group, organization, district, or school coordinates to increase parental knowledge in a particular area (e.g., teaching parents about standardized tests).

Much research has contributed to the field of parental involvement, because many researchers have proclaimed that with an increase in parental involvement comes an increase in student academic achievement. The question we need to ask is what programs have contributed to student academic success via parental involvement.

Parent Involvement Programs

One program that involves parents is *MegaSkills*[®] (Rich, 1992) which was evaluated in 1994-1995. This program focuses on character building for students but does include a parent workshop on classroom curriculum and ways to improve parent-school linkages. The one year evaluation included pre- and post-surveys which found positive results in several areas but did not clearly report an increase in student academic achievement for those students who participated in the program. *MegaSkills* has been translated into five languages, so students and parents from various language groups can participate. The

MegaSkills website does state that in Austin, Texas, students whose parents participated in the program did see an increase in statewide achievement test scores (MegaSkills® Education Center, 2004); however, we do not know whether there is a direct correlation between *MegaSkills* and student achievement or whether achievement was due to other variables, such as the fact that the schools had begun parent outreaches for the first time.

The *Families and Schools Together* (FAST) program (McDonald, Coe-Braddish, Billingham, Dibble, & Rice, 1991) focuses on “at-risk” children and their families so children will thrive at home, school, and within their community. Families within the program participate in an eight-week program, followed by two years of monthly meetings with a school-based group to provide social support. The main focus for this program is on alcohol and drug abuse, violence and delinquency, and reducing school dropout. Teachers pick students that display some “at-risk” behaviors such as short attention span, hyperactivity, non-empathetic aggression, poor self-esteem, and out of control behavior at home. Independent researchers have indicated that FAST has shown many positive functional outcomes for students and increased parental involvement. However, it was difficult to locate results on student academic achievement.

Of the evaluations on parent education programs, few gave substantial information on student academic success. In this day of standardized testing and millions of dollars being spent on parent education programs, we need to find quality programs that will (a) contribute to parent understanding of their children and their schools, (b) enable parents to learn about curriculum, (c) assist parents in learning about basic learning strategies for their children at home and at school, (d) train personnel to conduct the workshops/trainings, and most important, (e) contribute to student academic success.

Inception of the Program

Parents Assuring Student Success (PASS) is a book written by John Ban (2000) that addresses the need for more family involvement in the lives of children. The book was meant to be a stand-alone text for consumers to learn how to increase and support student study habits. It wasn't until Vickie Burt, an assistant superintendent, asked to create a program that involved PASS that the parent workshop was created.

Vickie Burt created the parent education program *PASSport to Success* that complimented the PASS book by John Ban. Initially, the *PASSport* program was given to parents whose children were enrolled in summer school; they were given free summer school tuition if their parents attended the program. Since then, Vickie Burt has trained a number of trainers who in turn offer the

PASSport program to families throughout the United States. Today, *PASSport* is conducted in many districts throughout the nation.

I became involved with *PASSport* through my research in families and schools. I became more interested in the program when I learned it focused on student's academic success through parent education. As a result, I went through the workshop training in order to learn how to teach the eight-week workshop and began to teach the program to urban middle school parents in Southern California. Before I began the investigation, I inquired if other research has been conducted on this program and the publisher assured me that no assessment had formally been produced.

Methodology

Methodology: Data Gathering

Data was gathered using both qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (developed surveys) methods. By using interviews and surveys (included in this report), the study aimed to clarify what the parents learned and whether the students' grades increased after their parents participated in the *PASSport* workshop.

Data Sources and Instrumentation

In 1989, Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) advanced five purposes for combining methods into a single study, and for the purpose of the evaluation, much of what Greene advises was used, including (1) triangulation, in the classic sense of seeking convergence of results, (2) complimentary, in that overlapping and different facets of a phenomenon may emerge, (3) developmental, wherein the first method is used sequentially to help inform the second method, (4) initiation, wherein contradictions and fresh perspectives emerge, and (5) expansion, wherein the mixed methods add scope and breadth to a study. By combining surveys and interviews for this evaluation, a clearer picture would develop on whether the program was the main indicator for parent and student success.

Creswell (1994) proposes three models that combine qualitative and quantitative designs. The "two-phase design" allows the researcher to conduct a separate quantitative study, and then complete the findings through qualitative measures. This approach would produce significant findings because of the nature of the instrument and coordination of the semi-structured interviews, and the two-phase design in this evaluation was critical to better define the results.

The first method used in this evaluation was a pretest survey (see Appendix, Figure 1) of parent participants, which included open-ended questions dealing with participant reactions toward their ability to assist their children with academic issues and questions focusing on the areas they wished to improve. The survey was intended to gather data that would help answer questions about the following:

- How parents use the program in their daily lives with their children;
- Whether *PASSport* assisted parents in learning about the skills as defined in the program;
- What recommendations the parents have regarding the program; and
- Whether the academic performance of students whose parents participated in the program increased.

The survey questions were developed by the evaluator and tested with parents from various backgrounds before they were distributed to the parents who participated in the workshop. The questions used a five-part Likert scale for measuring parent responses that ranged from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. To investigate the findings from parents, a pretest and posttest were given to measure parent success with the workshop. Open-ended questions were also given as part of the pre- and posttests to triangulate the data. The open-ended questions changed from the pretest to the posttest (see Appendix, Figure 2) in order to better determine, in written form, what the parents learned from the workshop.

Throughout the eight-week workshop series, parent interviews were conducted to measure how parents were implementing the prescribed strategies and whether additional information from the instructor was needed.

Methodology: Data Analysis

The data gathered was analyzed by using two primary methods based upon the type of data collected. The pre-post test survey was analyzed by using content analysis procedures. Data was synthesized, and then placed into categories based upon similarities of the data. Averages and t-tests were conducted to better illustrate the results for each question. These categories provided insights into the participant experience with the program.

The observation data, which was largely qualitative, was analyzed by way of developing themes from the participant responses. The analysis provided insights into the participants' reflection of *PASSport*. The data analysis results can be found in the findings section.

School Setting

Washington Middle School (pseudonym) is located in a primarily low socioeconomic district in Southern California and was chosen due to the schools willingness to participate in the study, the acquisition of a school grant, and the administration’s enthusiasm to offer a parent education course for their parents. Washington is located in an urban setting with more than 80% of their students on free or reduced lunch. The population is highly diverse and is represented by various languages. The principal is an African American male in his second year of that role in this middle school.

Participants

Before the actual workshop took place, the principal asked the *PASSport* leader to solicit parents during a parent meeting night to find those willing to be in the free parent education workshop. Of the 35 parents that signed up to be in the group, 16 participated in the workshop. Of the 16 parents, 5 were male and 11 were female. The age breakdown for the participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Age ranges of participating parents

Age Range	Number of Parents
20-29	1
30-39	9
40-49	4
50-59	2
Total	16

Out of the 16 participants, 14 stated they were Hispanic/Latino and 2 were Caucasian/White. Of participants, 12 were Spanish speakers, and 4 were either bilingual in English/Spanish or English was their only language. Also, 9 had completed some high school with 7 either working on or having completed college. Seven of the participants were single mothers, and the participants, on average, had close to three children per household. Per the responses on the survey, parents were involved in school related activities in some capacity. Most of these activities centered on parent-teacher conferences and meetings. Out of the 13 who responded to being involved at their child’s school, 7 were involved in at least three school related activities (PTA, conferences) while 3 others were involved in four school related activities. Overall, the participants were eager to be involved in *PASSport* and responded to direct questions the researcher asked

regarding their children and how the workshop influenced their household. The drawback to the participants was the lack of representation of the entire school. The administrators commented that they would have liked to have seen a more diverse group of parents attending, but were satisfied that parents were interested in the program.

Findings

Quantitative Analysis

The parents took part in a pre- and posttest analysis of their behavior regarding their children’s academics. Before taking the workshop, parents agreed that they could make a difference in their child’s academics. However, after the workshop, the parents strongly believed that they could make a difference in their child’s education.

Table 2. Survey Results

Selected Survey Items	Mean Scores	
	Pretest	Posttest
I can make a difference in helping my child do his or her best at school.	4.1250	4.9375
I help my child everyday with schoolwork.	3.3750	4.5000
I monitor my child’s progress at school everyday.	3.8750	4.5625
I have made a part of my home into a study area for my child.	3.8125	4.8750
My child receives a complete breakfast in the morning.	3.9375	4.6250
I know whether or not my child completes his or her assignments.	3.6875	4.5624
I am my child’s most important teacher.	3.8667	4.9375
I read in front of my child frequently.	3.5333	4.4375
I can learn skills to improve my child’s study habits.	4.2500	5.0000
I talk to my child regularly about school.	4.1875	4.9375
I discuss messages sent home with my child by the school.	4.0000	4.8125
Health problems can affect my child’s learning.	3.9375	4.8125
I regularly praise my child for his or her efforts.	3.8750	4.8125
I regularly praise my child for passing grades.	4.1875	4.8750
I help my child learn to monitor their study time.	3.5333	4.8125
I help my child develop better concentration at school.	3.4375	4.6250
I help my child organize information they are trying to learn.	3.6000	4.5000
I help my child learn to take good notes in class.	3.1875	4.5625
I help develop my child’s memory skills.	3.3750	4.5000
I help develop my child’s thinking skills.	3.5000	4.8750
I help my child learn how to study.	3.3750	4.5625
I help my child learn how to prepare for tests.	3.3125	4.6875
I help my child improve his or her reading skills.	3.6250	4.6875
I reward my child when he or she does well in school.	4.2500	4.8750
I display my child’s schoolwork in the home.	4.0625	4.8750
I regularly ask my child for his or her opinion on a topic.	3.7857	4.9375
I know which school legislation pertains to my children.	3.0000	4.0625

On the survey, the letter grade “A” had a value of “1.00,” “B” had a value of “2.00,” “C” had a value of “3.00,” “D” had a value of “4.00,” and “F” had a value of “5.00.” There was a significant gain in the children’s average grade

upon completion of the workshops. The students whose parents began the workshop had an average grade of “B” (2.5000). However, after the eight-week program, these same students were able support an average grade of an “A” (1.4375) in their subjects.

While some parents were not involved before the workshop, all parents were strongly involved and monitored their children’s schoolwork when the workshop was completed. Parents from this study also began to interact more with their children’s schoolwork by increasing the study areas within their own homes, making sure their children received a complete breakfast (some modules in the workshop focused on nutrition), working with their children by quizzing them about school related materials, using the materials from the workshop to increase their child’s memory, discussing school related literature that was being sent home, and speaking to their children about school and non-school related items. The parents became stronger advocates for their children and their schoolwork by questioning their children about homework, rewarding their children for their work, and praising their children for being involved in school. Parents also began to learn about the nature of education and their children by reading more in front of them, learning about adolescent health, and becoming more knowledgeable about legislation and education policy that pertained to their children and their school. Generally, the parents found that their children’s overall grade average increased over the course of the eight-week workshop. These results indicate that there is strong reason to believe that *PASSport* accounted for parent and student change from the pretest to the posttest.

Qualitative Analysis

To better assure triangulation for this evaluation, parents were given a list of written questions to answer after their pre- and posttests. The written and oral comments from the parents provided further information for this evaluation.

Pretest Comments

Before the *PASSport* workshop began, parents were asked what they wished to learn from the workshop. The parents were interested in these topics:

- How to assist in their children’s learning,
- How to memorize (for tests),
- How to help their children better prepare for tests,
- How to help their child stay on task while doing homework,
- Strategies for (academic) success and keeping the child motivated (in school),

- How their child can learn “resilience,” by learning how to provide the children with the tools needed to get them through “good times and bad times,” (further questioning revealed that parents wished to know how to keep their children motivated when they may not be feeling well physically or emotionally),
- Language development programs for themselves (Spanish-speaking parents), and
- How to better prepare for parent teacher conferences.

An important item to note is, out of the eight themes the parents wanted to learn, six of these would be part of the *PASSport* program.

When parents were asked as part of their pretest questions, “What can you do in your home to help your child succeed in school?” the parents responded by saying,

- Give more attention to homework,
- Learn how to express the importance of school to their children so their children will know how important it is,
- Look for more information on schools and programs such as *PASSport*,
- Learn how to set up study areas,
- Design rules for TV and video game use after homework,
- Learn to be consistent with their children (regarding study times, chores),
- Have a daily routine for homework and reading,
- Show their children more love by being a part of their school life,
- How to go to their school and show the teachers, administrators, and their children that they care about their children’s education, and
- How to communicate to their children about the importance of school and an education.

Further investigation revealed that the parents knew what they wished to improve, but also wanted to be reassured that what they *wished* to do was in fact what “experts” in education (teacher educators from universities) *wanted* them to do as parents. Again, interestingly enough, most of what the parents knew about what they could do at home would be part of *PASSport*.

Posttest Questions

At the conclusion of the eight-week workshop, parents were again asked a series of questions after taking their surveys to better understand how the workshop contributed to student academic success and parent knowledge. These questions can be found in the Appendix under Figure 2.

After the parents filled in their answers, the instructor asked if their answers could be read off in class anonymously to gather information, in order to save time. To ensure anonymity, an interpreter was used to read all the answers so the audience would not know whether the answers from the parents were from English or Spanish speakers. Confidentiality of the participants' identity was of utmost importance for the evaluator. Elaboration on their answers was strictly voluntary.

The first question asked of the parents was: **“What strategies from the workshop have you used in your home with your children?”**

One parent responded:

I learned one can be more productive in the lives of their children, and I learned about the responsibilities that we have as parents and the tools that we can learn in order to help our kids out more.

When probed further about whether the parent knew about their responsibility in their child's education before the workshop, the woman said,

Yes, I was working with my child, but now, I make an effort everyday. In a sense, I make sure that when I get home from work, I talk to my child about their day, and find out what they did for homework.

As part of their homework from the workshop, parents were asked to keep track of the number of hours their children spend watching television. A father stated:

I didn't realize how much TV my children watched until we were told to record how many hours a week they (children) watched. I felt as if I have been cheating my children out of something.

This father was visibly distraught while discussing his findings regarding his child's television viewing. Many parents discussed the television habits of their children. Comments were made such as, “I didn't know they (their children) watched so much,” and another parent said,

I finally have a person tell me that there shouldn't be a television in their room...when I told them (children) that a professor believes that televisions should not be in their room, they didn't fight with me!

The television homework was a success, for it assisted parents in understanding that *PASSport* advocates for limited television viewing. Parents are also encouraged to watch television with their children and talk about what is being viewed. If television is to be viewed, educational channels should be encouraged.

Another successful strategy the parents learned from the training was to create a “study place” in the home for their children. The instructor gave a three-walled, prefabricated cardboard cutout to parents and showed them how to make a personal study area for their child. One parent replied:

I found that by creating a study place in the house for my son has worked! He knows where to do his homework, and I went out and bought him some extra school supplies so he doesn't have an excuse not to do his homework.

A concern with many low socioeconomic families is the ability to create a place where a child can study. When asked about this, parents expressed that some families find it difficult to create a study place due to the amount of people living within a 1-2 bedroom home/apartment. However, the parents made positive comments regarding the use of the study “cubby” that was provided for them by the instructor (a three-sided cardboard walled station) and worked to decorate the cubby with their child.

The one item that seemed to have the most impact on the parents was an assignment that urged the parents to write a letter to their children and indicated how they felt about their child. A parent responded by saying:

One of the things I liked was when the instructor gave us directions to write a love letter to our children. This enabled my child to see what she means to me. I never knew a letter could do so much.

When inquiries were made regarding this assignment, parents were very vocal and were excited to express what a difference the letters made. Another parent stated the letter “caught my kid off guard,” and another said, “It (the letter) made me realize that I need to be more positive with my kid.”

The second open-ended question for the parents asked: **“What workshop chapters did you enjoy the most and why?”**

One parent responded:

I liked when we talked about things that dealt with issues we as parents were personally dealing with at home. When you (the instructor) started the first day saying that we were our children's first and primary teacher, it made me think about what I should be doing at home. The first chapter on attitude made me realize that I do have the power and the capability to teach my child.

The chapter on attitude did make a difference in the lives of many of the parents, for this was the first workshop module, and parents were told that *their* attitude mattered greatly in how their children would respond to education

and learning. Parents immediately felt frustrated with their own parenting techniques. Some parents stated they were having troubles with their teenagers. It was at this time that other parents began to offer suggestions and support for the struggling parents.

Some of the parents enjoyed the module information on memorization. One parent replied:

When we spoke about memorization and how to take notes, I immediately shared this with my child because he had a test coming up on Friday. I sat down with him, and he listened! He received a high grade on his test! [Note: the workshop met on Monday nights.]

Many of the parents appreciated learning about the various themes from *PASSport*, and one parent made a statement that was repeated throughout the written survey:

I liked the homework and the elements of learning, strategies of studying, taking notes, memorization, and the thinking process. The workshop and the chapters were interesting and provocative, and the workshop has given me the ability to assist my children in ways I never knew that I could!

The next question aims to identify the purpose workshops such as *PASSport* endorse—that with an increase in parental involvement and education, a student’s academic success increases. The question was: **“Have your children’s grades improved since you have implemented the strategies you have learned through *PASSport*?”**

All the parents responded in the affirmative to this question. One parent confided:

YES! My child’s grades have improved. I didn’t know that something as simple as taking this workshop would improve my child’s grades, but it has! I wish I had learned about this (the strategies learned through *PASSport*) before this year. I wonder if it is too late to teach my child new strategies...I hope not.

The parent was assured that their child could continue to learn and make strides in the improvement of their grades if the parent continued their own growth and kept their child accountable.

The parents also noted that they appreciated the time, effort, and patience the instructor had in delivering the material. One parent was critical in stating that the instructor gave “too many history examples” when referring to how to implement the strategies (note: the instructor was a former high school social studies instructor), but overall the parents were grateful for having an

instructor who could answer many of the questions the parents asked regarding special education, education policy, and other items related to education.

When the instructor concluded asking questions regarding the survey, the parents started to talk about their own learning experiences. One parent stated that during her Thanksgiving dinner, she quizzed extended family members on phrases used in the workshop. The parent wanted to reiterate what the instructor showed regarding learning and the importance of finishing homework to prepare for tests. Other parents gave examples of how the strategies learned in the workshop have assisted them in their everyday lives at work and at home. One parent stated that while she drove her children to school, she would turn the radio off and talk to her children about current events. She stated that she was better able to understand her children's viewpoints of the world just by turning off the car radio and engaging in a conversation. She also noted that her children were more willing to talk to her about other items once she took the initiative and asked them about schoolwork and other matters.

The parents were both excited and disappointed when the workshop concluded. The parents enjoyed being recognized for the time they invested by receiving certificates of completion, but also wished they could spend more time discussing other strategies they could use with their children.

Conclusions

From the quantitative results to the qualitative results, parents became more knowledgeable regarding education and in assisting their children in the education process. Because of this, parents were very supportive of the workshop, for their children made substantial gains in their grades and in their study habits. However, to gain further insight, the guiding questions from the beginning of the evaluation will be summarized.

Question 1: How did parents interact with their children after learning various modules from *PASSport*?

Before the workshop, many parents were unaware they could empower themselves to learn more about education and to assist their children in succeeding at school. As we saw from the quantitative data, parents made substantial gains in many of the items that measured growth in actively being involved with their children in the academic strategies that were presented in the *PASSport* workshop. The parent interviews revealed that this growth also translated into positive communication and relationship building between the parents and their children. Parents reported that they increased the amount of

time they spent with their children performing academic and non-academic tasks. Parents also reported that their children were more responsive when asked about their schooling. For some of the *PASSport* workshop modules, some parents brought their children because they could not afford to pay for a person to watch them. Although not part of the evaluation, the evaluator asked the children several times what “they thought” about their parents being involved in *PASSport*. Most the children were shy and said they “didn’t care” or thought it “was neat” that their parents were involved. One middle school child reported, “I like it because my mom is able to understand that my subjects are hard and that I do not like all my teachers. But, she makes me do my homework everyday!”

Parents also reported an increase of their participation and willingness to participate in school-related functions and began asking more questions regarding school policies and procedures. This empowerment of voicing concern does not seem to be a focus of *PASSport*, but for some parents, it became the byproduct of learning about curriculum and becoming more empowered at home due to the *PASSport* workshop.

Question 2: What changes occurred in the lives of the parents and students?

As mentioned above, many (if not all) parents changed how they worked with their children. Parents became more assertive when they spoke about education with their kids and with educators. As a result, academic achievement increased. An important development from the workshop was that parents became advocates for their children when they did address their children’s teachers. Parents found some teachers felt uncomfortable that questions were being asked, but most parents found the teachers responsive to the questions. Much research has been collected regarding school-home communication and how teachers and parents can better communicate with one another (Ramirez, 1999). Parents in this study found that when they approached teachers with questions about assignments or questioned aspects of the curriculum, teachers were at first surprised, but then gave additional time to the parent to answer their questions. Some parents reported that they themselves became better able to ask questions, and started to become more familiar with the issues that teachers were concerned about regarding discipline and students’ inability to turn in their assignments. This empathy was then brought home when parents spoke to their children about the care the teachers have for students. One parent reported that when the child heard that his mother spoke to his teacher about his school work, her child became more aware of the number of people who were supporting him in his work. By becoming more proactive, parents

were better able to communicate with teachers, administrators, and other school staff.

Question 3: What recommendations/suggestions could the participants provide for possible improvement for *PASSport*?

The parents in this study were knowledgeable about what they needed to do with their children regarding school-related items when the study began. Parents acknowledged what they should be doing as parents before the program, but needed a few exercises and reinforcement activities to become stronger advocates and participants in their children's academic life. Some parents did acknowledge that they wished there were modules on special education and legislation, but overall the parents did not have any substantial recommendations to make to improve the workshop. However, some parents were concerned about their plight in continuing their own education, for two parents asked, "What do we do now since this workshop is over?" This question will be discussed in the recommendations section.

Question 4: How does *PASSport* differ from other parent education programs?

From reading about other parent education programs being offered across the nation and researching the results and interviewing parents from this workshop, the evaluator found many parent education programs lack insight on how to improve student success. However, much can be said for the programs and types of themes they offer parents and the community. With the growing emphasis on student academic success and grades, parent education programs such as *PASSport* will be in demand from parents, teachers, administrators, and districts.

By focusing on thematic chapters or modules that require parents to look critically at their home environment and their own attitudes toward their child's academics, parents are invited to become participants in their child's schooling through *PASSport*. As mentioned earlier, parents in this study became advocates not only for their children, but for their children's teachers, as well. Parents also became more literate on education and how to assist in teaching and strategizing for academic success. This combination of outcomes provided parents with the needed materials to work with their children through the eight weeks that the program was offered. However, the evaluator did question whether the outcomes were a result of the program or another issue.

A concern which may exist among evaluators is verifying whether the results

from these participants are substantial and would assist in the development of future studies. One such area in question is whether or not a “halo effect” developed in this study while working with participants and surveying them on this program. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002) suggest that a halo effect is “The tendency for a rater’s general impression of a subject to influence the rating given for specific aspects or behaviors of the subject” (p. 560). A halo effect essentially means that participants will answer in a way that they feel the researcher wishes them to. If it were not for the interviews and the substantial examples given from the participants regarding situations in which they used materials from *PASSport* with others, the halo effect may have been in question. However, these examples and the triangulation of the data both lessen the possibility of a halo effect.

Overall, the participants in *PASSport* were able to contribute to their children’s academic success by (1) showing their children that they cared about their academic success by attending the weekly sessions, (2) changing their home environment so their children can study, (3) changing their own attitudes and becoming empowered to be an advocate for their child, (4) being better able to ask questions of their children’s teachers and school administrators, and (5) acknowledging that as parents, they need to continue to be involved in their child’s social and academic life.

Recommendations

PASSport is a parent education program aimed at teaching parents ways they could be better educators for their children. Although the parents in this study reported an increase in their children’s academic achievement, there are some recommendations to consider.

One major recommendation is to make sure the trainers are knowledgeable regarding the field of education. Many questions surfaced during the modules on note-taking and test preparation regarding children with special needs. Although the content for *PASSport* does not specifically address special education, some parents were concerned that what they were learning did not apply to their child. Fortunately, my background as an educator enabled me to answer questions that parents presented on topics such as special education, education policy, charter schools, and curriculum. Therefore, before a workshop is delivered, the representatives from *PASSport* would need to inquire about the trainer’s credentials. Many of the parents acknowledged the ability of the trainer to answer many of their educational questions.

Although the parents benefited from the workshop, they were still concerned with what they were to do once the program was completed. As

mentioned earlier, this is a good question. Many parents worried whether their children would still succeed after the workshop ended. One possible recommendation is to include follow-up opportunities for parents so they may “check-in” and be held accountable in some way to continue their efforts in assisting their children and their children’s education. Also, although not a part of the present program, additional modules could be developed for parents who are interested in learning more about adolescents, their development, and their education.

As a English/Spanish bilingual program, *PASSport* is able to reach many families interested in learning about the education of their child. However, families immigrate to the United States from a variety of countries. It is the understanding of this evaluator that the publisher allows districts or schools to purchase a site license that would enable users to translate the *PASSport* materials into various languages. It would be interesting to find out how the materials are translated and how the instructors are trained to use the course materials.

One other recommendation is the possibility of including a chapter/module on the benefits of a healthy diet to a student’s health and performance. Although parents became more aware of the importance of nutrition, some were still questioning “how” nutrition attributed to their child’s well-being when it came to studying.

Also, the evaluator found it interesting to interview the children that were present for the workshop. *PASSport* does require parents to interact with their children at home, but it would be interesting to find out ways parents and their children can interact during a workshop. If parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds find it difficult to provide childcare for their children while they participate in the program, optional activities could be provided within the teacher manual that would include the participation of children with their parents.

Future Studies

Through this investigation, *PASSport* was found to be an academic success for the 16 parents and their children. However, the number of participants and demographics for this study should be taken into account. It would benefit others if such a study were conducted over the course of three years and thus might include working with parents of middle school students as they enter high school, and/or working with high school freshman and their parents and studying the effectiveness and student academic success through the student’s senior year of high school (survey and interview both parents and students). Such a study would then be better able to discuss and disseminate whether

PASSport had a lasting effect on the parents and their children. This type of study would benefit not only the publishers, but also others who may be interested in making *PASSport* a part of their school's curriculum. Another possible study would include participants from the United States as well as another nation. This would create more diverse variables within the study, and in turn reflect a greater understanding of the effectiveness of *PASSport* and how it assists in increasing student achievement.

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Appendix

Figure 1. Parent/Guardian Pre-Survey

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (Please Circle One)

1. Gender:
 - Male
 - Female
2. Age:
 - Under 20
 - 20-29
 - 30-39
 - 40-49
 - 50-59
 - 60-69
 - 70+
3. Ethnicity:
 - Caucasian
 - African American
 - Hispanic
 - Native American
 - Asian
 - Pacific Islander
 - Multi-ethnic
 - Other (Please specify) _____
4. Highest Education Level:
 - Elementary (K–8)
 - High School (9–12)
 - GED
 - Vocational/Technical School
 - 2-Year College Degree
 - 4-Year College Degree
 - Graduate Degree
5. Number of children under 18 years: _____
 - Age: _____
 - Lives at home: Yes No
 - Gender: M F
 - School: _____
 - Age: _____
 - Lives at home: Yes No
 - Gender: M F
 - School: _____
 - Age: _____
 - Lives at home: Yes No
 - Gender: M F
 - School: _____
6. What is your relationship to the child(ren):
 - Mother
 - Father
 - Guardian
 - Other (Please specify) _____
7. Child(ren) lives with:
 - Mother
 - Father

- Guardian
Other (Please specify) _____
8. Does your child(ren) receive free/reduced lunch?
Yes No
 9. Are you a past or present Head Start parent?
Yes No
If Yes, what year?: _____
 10. Has your child(ren) participated in any after-school homework programs? Yes No
 11. Is your child(ren)/family involved with any community agencies? Yes No
If Yes, which agency? (e.g., DFACS, Mental Health, Juvenile Justice) _____
 12. Is your attendance at Passport to Success training required? Yes No
 13. How have you been involved in your child(ren)'s school? (Circle all that apply)
 - PTO/PTA meetings
 - Volunteer
 - Parent requested conferences
 - Teacher/Administrator requested conferences
 - Other (Please specify) _____

DIRECTIONS

For each of the following statements, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree, according to the scale below. Please read each question carefully and respond to all of the items. If you have more than one child, please complete this survey while concentrating on the child that is in most need of academic assistance.

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = neutral
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree

1. I can make a difference in helping my child do his or her best at school.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
2. I help my child every day with schoolwork.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
3. I monitor my child's progress at school every day.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
4. I have made a part of my home into a study area for my child.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
5. I have my child study in the same place at home every day.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
6. I should have my child do homework and study in a quiet place.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
7. My child gets at least 8 hours of sleep every night.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

PARENT EDUCATION AND SUCCESS

8. My child receives a complete breakfast every morning.
1 2 3 4 5
9. I know whether or not my child completes his or her assignments.
1 2 3 4 5
10. I keep in regular contact with all of my child's teachers.
1 2 3 4 5
11. I attend parent-teacher conferences.
1 2 3 4 5
12. I check my child's homework every night.
1 2 3 4 5
13. I have the skills to help my child with his or her homework.
1 2 3 4 5
14. I am my child's most important teacher.
1 2 3 4 5
15. I read in front of my child frequently.
1 2 3 4 5
16. I am important in my child's education.
1 2 3 4 5
17. I can learn skills to improve my child's study habits.
1 2 3 4 5
18. Children's education requires their parents' attention and time.
1 2 3 4 5
19. I talk to my child regularly about school.
1 2 3 4 5
20. I have plenty of reading materials (books, magazines, newspapers) available at home for my child.
1 2 3 4 5
21. Children and their parents should watch educational television programs and special event programs together.
1 2 3 4 5
22. I frequently help my child with homework.
1 2 3 4 5
23. I take my child to the public library regularly.
1 2 3 4 5
24. I regularly show my child interesting articles or pictures from magazines and newspapers.
1 2 3 4 5
25. I regularly attend school activities with my child.
1 2 3 4 5
26. I discuss messages sent home with my child by the school.
1 2 3 4 5
27. I schedule a period in the evening as homework time.
1 2 3 4 5
28. I make sure that noise levels are kept down during my child's homework time.
1 2 3 4 5
29. Health problems can affect my child's learning.
1 2 3 4 5
30. My child eats fresh fruits and vegetables daily.
1 2 3 4 5
31. I regularly praise my child for his or her efforts.
1 2 3 4 5
32. I regularly praise my child for passing grades.
1 2 3 4 5
33. I help my child learn to monitor their study time.
1 2 3 4 5
34. I help my child develop good listening skills.
1 2 3 4 5
35. I help my child develop better concentration at school.
1 2 3 4 5
36. I help my child organize information they are trying to learn.
1 2 3 4 5
37. I help my child learn to take good notes in class.
1 2 3 4 5
38. I help develop my child's memory skills.
1 2 3 4 5
39. I help develop my child's thinking skills.
1 2 3 4 5
40. I help my child learn how to study.
1 2 3 4 5
41. I help my child learn how to prepare for tests.
1 2 3 4 5
42. I help my child improve his or her reading skills.
1 2 3 4 5
43. I reward my child when he or she does well in school.
1 2 3 4 5
44. I display my child's schoolwork in the home.
1 2 3 4 5
45. I regularly ask my child for his or her opinion on a subject or topic.
1 2 3 4 5
46. I know which school legislation pertains to my children.
1 2 3 4 5
47. What is your child's average grade thus far this school year (combine all classes)?
A B C D F

Short Answer

1) What topics, regarding your child's education, are you interested in learning more about?

2) Name three things you like about your child's school.

3) Name three things your child's school could do to improve.

4) What could your child's school do in order to make you become more involved in your child's education?

5) What can you do in your home to help your child succeed in school?

Figure 2. Short Answer from Post-Survey

Short Answer

- 1) What did you learn from the workshops?
- 2) What strategies from the workshops have you used in your home with your children?
- 3) What workshop chapters/modules did you enjoy the most or were the most informative?
What other workshop items would you like to see?
- 4) Has your children's grades improved since you have implemented the strategies you have learned through *PASSport*? If so, how have they improved?
- 5) How would you rate your instructor?

A. Y. "Fred" Ramirez is an associate professor of education at California State University, Fullerton. His research interests include parents and schools, school reform, teacher education, and multicultural education. He can be contacted at California State University, Fullerton, P. O. Box 6868, EC 190, Fullerton, CA, 92834.